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Jenny, Mathias

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The aspect system of Thai

Mathias Jenny
Bangkok and Zurich

1 Introduction

In this paper I will present the verbal aspect system of the Standard Thai language, which is the variety used in the area of Bangkok and also the means of communication and education throughout Thailand. Both the written variety and the colloquial speech of Bangkok are considered in the attempt to establish the aspectual system of the language.¹ Data from closely related languages and dialects are used whenever they are likely to give relevant insight into specific problems or lead to greater clarity in the discussion.

Of all grammatical sub-systems, tense-aspect-modality is probably the most complex and frustrating to the linguist. For one thing, it is an obligatory category without which simple sentences cannot be produced. (Givón 1984:269)

The good news for Thai is that aspect forms no obligatory category in the grammar, i.e. simple sentences can be produced without overt aspect markers, leaving the interpretation to the context. The aspect system of Thai is, however, no less frustrating. Given the fact that there are no morphological hints as to the function of a given word in a sentence and that many words used as TAM markers are also in use as full verbs, the picture one gets is rather blurred. It is due to exactly this non-obligatoriness of overt aspect markers that it is extremely difficult to get a coherent and consistent picture of the system.

Previous descriptions of the Thai verbal system are rare and not readily available. The main work cited here is *A Study of Aspect in Thai* (Boonyapatipark 1983), which will be discussed in section 2.

Thai is a language with a very poor morphological system. Apart from some kinds of derivation and faint traces of a developing verbal agreement for

¹ In choosing the example sentences for this paper, I have drawn from many different sources, both written and oral, including personal informal communication. The grammaticality of all sentences other than from the written sources presented has been checked with native speakers of Bangkokian Thai.

number, there are no morphological processes at all. With the morphological means lacking, their functions have to be taken over by lexical and syntactical processes. In the case of the Thai verbal system, tense, aspect, and mood are mainly expressed by auxiliaries and verb serialisation (cf. Bisang 1992). The grammaticalisation degree of the auxiliaries varies. Most auxiliaries still function as free morphemes syntactically, though they are usually bound to the VP intonationally.

The unmarked word order in Thai is SVO, the verb and the (direct) object forming the VP. Nothing can come between V and O, not even TAM auxiliaries. This shows that the auxiliaries do not form a part of the verb proper, but rather of the VP as a whole.

2 The study of the Thai verbal system by Tasanalai Boonyapatipark

The first systematic account of the Thai verbal system is the thesis written by Tasanalai Boonyapatipark (1983). In this 250 plus page paper, the author examines Thai verbs and classifies them into different categories. Boonyapatipark's classification of Thai verbs is mainly based on Lyons (1977) with some adjustments.

Boonyapatipark's classification is based on semantic differences, not formal or syntactic ones, and in some cases appears rather arbitrary. There is, for example, no overt reason for postulating a subcategory for verbs denoting 'having and being' in Thai. Nor is there any reason to make a division between 'bodily sensations' and 'feelings and transitory attitudes'. One important verb class is grouped in Boonyapatipark's 'dynamic situations or states resulting from such situations'. This is the first attempt to account for the class of INITIOTRANSFORMATIVE verbs in Thai. Having proposed this classification of Thai verbs, the author discusses the meaning and function of six 'aspect markers', viz. *kamlan*¹, *yuu*¹, *yan*², *leeu*³, *khrrri* and *ca?*⁴, with the different verb classes, as well as restrictions and possible cooccurrences of these markers.

Figure 1: Boonyapatipark's verb classes²

1. States	
Permanent states	
qualities:	suuŋ ⁴ ('tall'), tɔ̌ ² ('short'), ʔuən ² ('fat'), phoom ⁴ ('slim'), suai ⁴ ('pretty'), lek ² ('small'), yai ¹ ('big')
inert cognition/ attitudes:	ruu ¹ ('know'), khau ² cai ('understand'), rak ² ('love'), chuua ² ('believe'), chɔɔp ² ('like'), kliat ¹ ('hate')
having/being:	mii ('have'), pen ('be'), khɔɔp ² khɔɔŋ ('possess')
Temporary states	
inert perception:	hen ⁴ ('see'), dai ² yin ('hear'), dai ² klin ¹ ('smell sth'), ruu ¹ stuk ¹ ('feel')
bodily sensation:	cep ¹ ('hurt'), khan ('itch'), puat ¹ ('ache')
feelings/ transit. attitudes:	hiu ⁴ ('be hungry'), moo ⁴ hoo ⁴ ('be angry'), siə ⁴ cai ('be sad'), nuai ¹ ('be tired')
2. Dynamic situations	
Processes	
non-accomplishments:	wiŋ ² ('run'), kin ('eat, drink'), dɔ̌ym ('walk'), tham kaanbaan ² ('do one's homework')
accomplishments :	tat ¹ sin ⁴ cai ('decide'), luak ² ('choose')
Events	
achievements:	taai ('die'), set ¹ ('finish'), cop ¹ ('end'), thuŋ ⁴ ('reach'), maa thuŋ ⁴ ('arrive')
momentary situations:	sədut ¹ ('stumble'), khɔ̌ʔ ² ('knock'), kradoot ¹ ('jump'), khwaan ² ('throw')
3. Dynamic situations or states resulting from such situations	
with animate subject only:	suəm ⁴ ('wear'), sai ¹ ('wear'), yuuun ('stand'), naŋ ² ('sit')
with anim. or inan.subject:	pyɔ̌t ¹ ('open'), pit ¹ ('close'), hak ¹ ('break'), tok ¹ ('fall')
with inanimate subject only:	khaat ¹ ('be torn'), teek ¹ ('burst, break')

Though Boonyapatipark is a native speaker of Bangkok Thai (Standard Thai), some of the examples marked as ungrammatical are very common and perfectly grammatical in spoken Thai. (2.1) for instance is not problematic at all.

(2.1) ʔkhau⁴ kamlan taai (Boonyapatipark 1983:70)
3hum PROG die

This sentence is very well intelligible (and regarded correct) as '(S)he is dying' or '(S)he is going to die'.

² I use IPA symbols to transcribe Thai, indicating the tones according to the indigenous Thai system, i.e. the mid level tone is unmarked, the low tone is marked ¹, the falling tone ², the high tone ³ and the rising tone ⁴. In quoting examples from other sources, I adjust the spelling accordingly in order to facilitate the reading.

The use of *kamlan* with verbs indicating permanent states is, according to Boonyapatipark, not grammatical in most cases. There are some exceptions: "The use of *kamlan* may, however, be acceptable with some verbs of this group [verbs indicating qualities]. For example, the combination of *kamlan* with *ruai* 'be rich' as in (27) [my (2.2)] below is acceptable."

- (2.2) *khau*⁴ *kamlan* *ruai*
 3hum PROG be.rich
 'He is rich at the present.'

This sentence is grammatically correct, another possible reading being 'he is going to be rich' or 'he is becoming rich'.

Boonyapatipark tries to force Thai into a system developed for English and similar languages. This is done by marking correct sentences as ungrammatical, choosing the translations that best fit into this system and splitting the postulated categories arbitrarily ("...may be acceptable with some verbs of this group ..."). It is not surprising, therefore, that Boonyapatipark's classification fails the common tests for actionality, the first three of which have been in use since Vendler 1957 (Figure 2). Boonyapatipark has to be accredited, however, with presenting the first attempt to bring some order into the Thai verbal system. Her attempt may not be very successful in some respects, but given the lack of earlier studies to refer to, her thesis must be considered an important step in the study of Thai grammar. Especially in analysing the TAM markers she discusses, she presents important insights and very useful labels, as will be seen later on.

Figure 2 shows Boonyapatipark's classification of verbs tested according to some common tests for establishing verb classes. As the table clearly shows, the verb classes are not evident from the results. Especially striking is the obvious impossibility to establish a class of telic verbs as opposed to atelic verbs. Another problem that is evident in Boonyapatipark's analysis is the English translation, which in many cases does not reflect the semantics of the Thai verb. What Boonyapatipark classifies as "states" is more correctly translated as 'be xx' or 'become xx'. "Non-accomplishments" can have telic readings in a given context without overt marking. It is clear, therefore, that a categorisation of the Thai verbs has to be based on language specific tests, which might (and in fact is very likely to) lead to a very different picture than the one seen in European languages. I will attempt a categorisation below.

Figure 2: Test of Classification according to Boonyapatipark

Verb \ Test	A	B	C	D	E	F	Verb class
suuŋ ⁴ 'tall'	+	+	+	+	+	=	qualities
riə ² 'short'	+	+	-	-	-	=	
ʔuan ² 'fat'	+	+	+	+	+	=	
ruu ³ 'know'	-	+	+	+	-	+	inert cognition /attitudes
rak ³ 'love'	+	+	+	+	+	+	
mii 'have'	+	+	+	+	?	=	having / being ³
pen 'be'	-	+	+	+	?	+	
hen ⁴ 'see'	-	+	+	+	-	+	inert perceptions bodily sensations
cep ¹ 'hurt'	+	+	+	+	-	+	
khan 'itch'	+	+	+	+	-	+	
hiu ⁴ 'hungry'	+	+	+	+	-	+	feelings
nuai ¹ 'tired'	+	+	+	+	-	+	
wiŋ ² 'run'	+	+	+	+	+	+	non-accomplishments
kin 'eat'	+	+	+	+	+	+	
luak ² 'choose'	+	+	+	+	+	+	accomplishments
taai 'die'	-	-	+	-	+	+	achievements
set ¹ 'finish'	-	-	+	-	+	+	
sadut ¹ 'stumble'	+	+	+	+	+	+	momentary situations
khoʔ ³ 'knock'	+	+	+	+	+	+	
sai ¹ 'wear'	+	+	+	+	+	+	Dyn/States animate S only
naŋ ² 'sit'	+	+	+	+	+	+	
prɔt ² 'open'	+	+	+	+	+	+	Dyn/States animate or inanimate S
pit ¹ 'close'	+	+	+	+	+	+	
khaat ¹ 'torn'	-	-	+	+	+	+	Dyn/States inanimate S only
teek ¹ 'break'	-	-	+	+	+	+	

Tests

- A. if someone x-s and is interrupted, he has x-ed
- B. for two hours, until two o'clock
- C. in two hours, in two years, in a minute
- D. start x-ing
- E. if someone x-s and is interrupted, he has almost x-ed
- F. at two o'clock (= possible if specific time expression is topic)

³ The verbs *pen* and *mii* are semantically empty, i.e. in many cases they cannot be analysed properly without a NP following them.

3 The Verb Categories in Thai

3.1 Punctual Verbs

A category that can be established by language internal formal means in Thai is the class of PUNCTUAL or MOMENTARY verbs which have no temporal expansion, i.e. consist of only a situation change or transformation. This class is characterised by the non-cooccurrence with the TAM marker *yuu*¹, which denotes a limited phase ('temporary') (cf. 4.1). Not compatible⁴ with *yuu*¹ are verbs like *taai* 'die', *rəbɔɔt*¹ 'explode', *haai*⁴ 'recover (from illness), disappear'⁵, *set*¹ 'finish', *cop*¹ 'end, come to an end'. This class coincides largely with Boonyapatipark's 'achievements'.

The semantic structure of punctual verbs consists of only one point: ⊗. Punctual verbs can be used in attributive position with a resultative reading without overt marking. An expression like *khon taai* 'person die' can be interpreted as 'people die' or 'dead person'.

3.2 Statives, activities, initiotransformatives

The bulk of the remaining verbal lexemes in Thai can at first sight be divided into two major groups that correspond roughly to 'verbs' and 'adjectives' in traditional European grammars. In spite of Bisang's reservations (1992:328), the comparative particle *kwaa*¹ is one formal criterion to define QUALITY VERBS, even if the resulting subcategory is not identical with Boonyapatipark's group of "verbs indicating qualities" and does not always conform to subcategories that can be established on other formal grounds, such as cooccurrence with certain TAM markers.

If the comparative marker *kwaa*¹ is used with a verb other than a stative, the stative *maak*² 'much, many' must be added:

- (3.1) *khau*⁴ *suuŋ*⁴ *kwaa*¹ *phii*²*chaai* *khau*⁴.
 3hum tall COMPAR older.brother 3hum
 'He is taller than his brother.'

- (3.2) a. **phom*² *tham* *ŋaan* *kwaa*¹ *khau*⁴.
 1sm do work COMPAR 3hum
 b. *phom*⁴ *tham* *ŋaan* *maak*² *kwaa*¹ *khau*⁴.
 1sm do work much COMPAR 3hum
 'I work more than he does.'

⁴ Not compatible means that these verbs cannot occur with *yuu*¹ alone. In most cases *yuu*¹ is possible together with a location adverb, which is analyzed differently. (cf. section 4)

⁵ The grammaticality of the expression *haai yuu*¹ 'is recovering' is more than dubious.

It is not ungrammatical to add *maak*² in (3.1), but rather unidiomatic. The omission of *maak*² in (3.2a) on the other hand leads to ungrammaticality of the sentence.

The verb *suuŋ*⁴ in (3.3), as most statives, does not only describe a state (of being tall), but also a continuous process (of growing and becoming tall). In a natural setting, the first interpretation does not make much sense, therefore the second reading is preferred. But compare also (3.4), where only the state is expressed by the quality verb:

- (3.3) *khau⁴ yaŋ suuŋ⁴ yuu¹.*
 3hum PERS tall TMPR
 'He is still tall.' or (better) 'He is still growing.'

- (3.4) *khau⁴ phuŋ² cə ʔaayu² sip¹ khuəp¹, yaŋ mai² too rɔk¹.*
 3hum just.now PROS age ten year PERS NEG big CEXP
 'He is only ten years old, he isn't (a) big (boy) yet.'

Clearly, the process of 'becoming a big boy' has started, but the relative state of 'being big' has not been reached yet. For *too* with a different interpretation see (4.33).

Some statives are conceived of as having no starting point or no end point. These include expressions like 'be a child', 'young' which have no beginning, but only an end point, or 'to be old' which in a natural setting does not end at any point, but has started at some time. We can therefore divide the statives in three subclasses, viz.

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. States with only beginning: | /----- |
| 2. States with only end point: | -----/ |
| 3. States with both beginning and end: | /-----/ |

A fourth group can be added, the totally stative predicates, which describe a property that is not normally subject to change, i.e. excluding both beginning and end points. This group is expressed in Thai mostly by nominals, with or without a copula. Typical examples are expressions like *nam³ nak¹* 'weight'⁶, *chuuu²* 'name', *pen chaau phut³* 'be a Buddhist', *ni² ʔsai⁴* 'attitude, character, behaviour' etc. As these predicates do not normally cooccur with aspect markers, they will not be considered in this study.

It has to be noted that beginning and end points here are purely (natural) temporal limits, not crucial boundaries. A simple test for the distinction of the subclasses of quality verbs is the applicability of time expressions like 'since' and 'until' in natural settings. With states excluding the end point, only 'since'

⁶ Only the "weight" of certain things like a car, a stone, etc. is totally stative, of course. When talking about people, the change in weight can be expressed by adding aspect markers.

is applicable, with those excluding the beginning only 'until', while the rest is combinable with both.

- (3.5) ton²maai³ nii³ yai¹ tan²tɛɛ¹ (?conthun⁴) pii thii²lɛɛu³.
 tree this big since (until) year previous
 'This tree has been big since (*until) last year.'

- (3.6) khau⁴ tuə tiə² con thun⁴ (*tan²tɛɛ¹) ʔaayu³ sip¹haa² pii.
 3hum body hort until reach since age fifteen year
 'He was short until (*since) he was fifteen years old.'

- (3.7) khau⁴ suəi⁴ tan²tɛɛ¹ / conthun¹ ʔaayu³ sip¹haa² pii.
 3hum pretty since / until age fifteen year
 'She was beautiful since/until she was fifteen years old.'

These distinctions are important as some of the TAM markers which will be discussed in section 4 are sensitive to the semantic structure of quality verbs.

Usually statives are compatible with specific time expressions only if the time expression is the topic (in sentence initial position) rather than the comment of the sentence:

- (3.8) a. tɔɔn ʔaayu³ haa² khuəp¹, khau⁴ suəi⁴.
 TEMP age five year 3hum pretty
 b. ʔkhau⁴ suəi⁴ tɔɔn ʔaayu³ haa² khuəp¹.
 3hum pretty TEMP age five year
 'She was pretty when she was five years old.'

There are, however, quality verbs that can be used with specific time expressions denoting the beginning of the state:

- (3.9) naalikaa pluk¹ dan tɔɔn hok¹ moon chaau³.
 clock wake_r loud TEMP six o'clock morning
 'The alarm clock went off at six a.m.'

The verb *dan* 'be loud' obviously behaves like an "initiotransformative" verb, a category recognised already by Boonyapatipark. She calls this class "verbs indicating dynamic situations and states arising from such situations" (1984:57) (DYN.STAT). The members of this class are characterised by their semantic structure indicating an event (transformation) leading to a ensuing state. Both the event and the state are expressed by the same verbal lexeme.

- (3.10) khau⁴ lap¹ tɔn sii¹ thum².
 3hum asleep TEMP four evening.hour
 'He fell asleep at 4 p.m.'
- (3.11) phom⁴ ruu³ tɔn thii² phom⁴ cɔɔ khau⁴ khraŋ reek².
 1sm know TEMP ATTR 1sm meet 3hum time first
 'I knew/realised it, when I met him/her the first time.'
- (3.12) ?khau⁴ tuə suuŋ⁴ muə² ?aayu³ sip¹hok¹ pii.
 3hum body tall when age sixteen year
 'He grew tall when he was sixteen years old.'

As shown above, many (but not all!) of the quality verbs established through the compatibility with the comparative *kwaa*¹ cannot be used in these constructions. Here the time adverb *taŋ*² *tee*¹ 'since' or an auxiliary/aspect marker like the phasal auxiliary *rɔɔm*² 'begin, start' or the perfective marker *dai*² (see 4.2) have to be used instead.

- (3.13) khau⁴ tuə suuŋ⁴ taŋ²tee¹ ?aayu³ sip¹hok¹ pii.
 3hum body tall since age sixteen year
 'He has been tall since the age of sixteen.'
- (3.14) khau⁴ rɔɔm² tuə suuŋ⁴ muə² ?aayu³ sip¹hok¹ pii.
 3hum start body tall when age sixteen year
 'He started being tall when he was sixteen years old.'

According to Boonyapatipark the DYN.STAT verbs are sensitive to the animacy of their subject (see fig. 1). The distinction is especially important in clauses where the temporary aspect marker *yuu*¹ is present, resulting in different interpretations according to the animacy of the subject. Though Boonyapatipark's analysis can explain the differences of interpretation of DYN.STAT verbs, a more adequate explanation is to take the semantic role of the subject as determining factor for the interpretation of DYN.STAT verbs in *yuu*¹-clauses. If the subject is actor, the normal interpretation is "focus on activity", while with undergoer subject it is "focus on state". Many DYN.STAT verbs can take both actor and undergoer as subject, and many subjects (especially animate) can function both as actor or undergoer. In these cases only the context determines whether we are dealing with actor or undergoer subject interpretation.

While in (3.15) the subject can be interpreted only as actor, in (3.16) the context suggests this reading.

- (3.15) *khau⁴ pɔɔt¹ prətuu yuu¹.*
 3hum open door TMPR
 'He is opening the door.'
- (3.16) *yaa¹ phuŋ² khau² maa, chan⁴ sai¹ suə² yuu¹.*
 PROH just.now enter come 1fam wear shirt TMPR
 'Don't come in yet, I'm putting on my shirt.'

To focus on the action with DYN.STAT verbs, the new high focal progressive marker *kamləŋ* (see 4.1.4) is usually employed. As the subject of *sai¹* can also be a semantic undergoer, example (3.16) is ambiguous and could be expressed more clearly as

- (3.17) *yaa¹ phuŋ² khau² maa, chan⁴ kamləŋ sai¹ suə² yuu¹.*
 PROH just.now enter come 1sf PROG wear shirt TMPR

While a possible comment to (3.16) might be something like 'why can't I come in, if you are wearing a shirt?', (3.17) is unambiguous in most cases (though a reading with focus on the state might be construed).

With undergoer subjects, the aspect marker *yuu¹* focuses on the state following the event.

- (3.18) *prətuu pɔɔt¹ yuu¹.*
 door open TMPR
 'The door is open.'

Another verbal class postulated by Boonyapatipark (1984:54) are 'verbs indicating non-accomplishments' or ACTIVITIES. With specific time expressions, these verbs are often interpreted as inchoatives, i.e. the time expression denotes the beginning of the activity. The interpretation is determined by the position of the time expression: if it is in topic position, the reading is 'situation going on at time x'; if the time expression is in the comment clause, the normal reading is 'situation starts at time x'.

There is obviously no clear-cut three-way distinction STATIVES - ACTIVITIES - INITIOTRANSFORMATIVES in Thai. We are rather dealing with a continuum on which the individual verbs or verbal expressions are to be located, many verbs sharing properties of more than one class.

The category encompassing statives, activities and initiotransformatives can be called DURATIVE verbs. Durative verbs have a certain duration, which may or may not be limited by temporal boundaries on either or both sides.

With some duratives, the initial limit has more prominence than with others, i.e. it can be focused on more easily. More easily here means that less marked context or overt marking is needed to achieve an inchoative reading ('initiotransformatives'). Others lack prominent limits, appearing as totally

stative, while still other verbs seem to have both initial and final limits of about equal prominence ("activities").

3.3 Telicity in Thai

As seen in figure 2, the telicity of Thai verbs can not easily be determined by using the common tests. Johanson speaks of "linguistic units expressing actions" and Comrie suggests that we should speak rather of "telic situations" than of "telic verbs":

Moreover, provided an appropriate context is provided, many sentences that would otherwise be taken to describe atelic situations can be given a telic interpretation. [...] However, although it is difficult to find sentences that are unambiguously telic or atelic, this does not affect the general semantic distinction made between telic and atelic situations. (1995:54)

It is certainly true for Thai that many verbs can be interpreted as telic or as atelic, depending on the context. While a verb like *khaa*² 'kill' is normally interpreted as telic, it does not necessarily have to be so. In (3.19), the expression *khaa*² *tuə* *taai* 'kill oneself, commit suicide' does not necessarily imply that the person really died and has therefore to be reinforced by *taai* *pai* *ciŋciŋ* 'she really died', in spite of the use of the compound *khaa*² *taai* 'kill-die', which normally expresses telicity.

- (3.19) *khau*⁴ *klum*², *lɔ̌ɰi* *khaa*² *tuə* *taai*, *lɛʔ*³ *kɔ*²
 3hum depressed CONS kill self die and COMM
taai *pai* *ciŋciŋ*
 die go real:RDP
 'She was depressed, therefore she committed suicide, and then she really died.' (LR:269)

One factor preventing an unambiguous telic reading is the fact that Thai verbs can both express an 'intention to act' and the 'activity' itself. As aspect is not an obligatory category, the prospective aspect does not have to be expressed overtly, but can be established by the context.

If we change the second part of (3.19) above, we get the reading 'tried to commit suicide':

- (3.20) *khau*⁴ *klum*², *lɔ̌ɰi* *khaa*² *tuə* *taai*, *tɛɛ*¹ *kɔ*² *mai*² *taai*.
 3hum depressed CONS kill self die but COMM NEG die
 'She was depressed, therefore she tried to commit suicide, but she did not die.'

Another candidate for the class of accomplishments that deserves some consideration is the verb *luum* 'forget'. Certainly 'forgetting' takes an amount of time, and it can not be called 'forgetting' if it is not carried out to the end. This seems to make 'forget' semantically a typical accomplishment. Still the tests to establish accomplishments fail with *luum*. It does not make sense to ask 'how long does it take to forget this?' or to say that 'it took him five years to forget'. The problem here seems to be a conceptual one. Although it takes some time to forget, we only realise the moment we have forgotten. We are not aware of the beginning of the process or the process itself. 'Forget' is therefore conceived of as punctual rather than as extended situation. That *luum* in Thai is in fact used as punctual is shown by its incompatibility with the temporary marker *yuu*¹. An atelic (or rather conative) interpretation of *luum* is given in sentence (3.21), where it is again the 'trying to do' that is dominant, not the activity itself:

- (3.21) *phəyaayaam* *thau²rai*, *luum* *thau²rai* *kə²*
 make.effort how.much forget how.much COMM
khon *muən⁴* *dɔɔm*.
 CONT same original
 'However hard I try, however much I (try to) forget, it's still the same as it was.' (from a popular Thai song)

One way to achieve telicity in an expression is by adding a definite object. As Thai grammar does not require an overt object with a transitive verb, the verb can in further references retain its telicity, even if the object is absent.⁷

- (3.22) *phom⁴* *taŋ²cai* *cə* **?aan¹** *naŋ⁴suu⁴* *lem²* *nii³*
 1sm intend PROS read book CL_{book} this
cop¹ *wan* *nii³*, *tɛɛ¹* *phəɔdii* *phuaŋ²* *maa* *haa⁴*, *kə²*
 end day this but just.then friend come look.for COMM
hɔɔi **?aan¹** **mai²** **cop¹**.
 CONS read NEG end
 'I intended to finish this book today, but then a friend came to see me, so I did not finish it.'

If in the sentence (3.22) *?aan¹ ... cop¹* is replaced by *?aan¹* and *?aan¹ mai² cop¹* by *mai² ?aan¹* or *mai² dai² ?aan¹*, the first part of the sentence could be interpreted as 'I intended to read in this book' and the second part would most likely be understood as 'I didn't read' or 'I didn't get to reading', while (3.22) implies that I started reading but did not finish the book.

⁷ It is common to overtly express nominal phrases only once in a paragraph, both written and spoken, unless some new information is added to them or the listener might lose track of them.

Overt telicity by combination of two or more verbs is very common in Thai. The first verb indicates an activity or an attempt to achieve a result and is characterised by the feature [+volition, + control] while the second one expresses the result and carries the features [-volition, -control]. A detailed description of these "completive" verbs is given in Noss (1964:127ff, cf. p.8f) and summarised in Bisang (1992:338f), who calls them 'resultative constructions'. The sentences (3.23) - (3.24) illustrate these telicising verb compounds.

- (3.23) *khau⁴ haa⁴ rot³ mai² cɛɛ.*
 3hum look.for car NEG find
 'He cannot find his car (although he is looking for it).'
- (3.24) *khun kin khaau² mot¹ leeu³ ruu⁴?*
 2hon eat rice be.all NSIT Q
 'Have you already eaten all your food?'

The verbs *haa⁴* 'look for' and *kin* 'eat' are not telic themselves, but with a V2 adding a final boundary, the whole expression usually becomes telic. Notice that the telicising verb in the compound does not have to be telic itself. *cɛɛ* 'find, meet' is not necessarily telic (i.e. it has readings that exclude telicity) but as V2 it is conceptualised as transformative.

As seen above (3.20), verbal compounds do not always result in telic readings. The context remains the main determining factor. This is due to the fact firstly that we always have to reckon with an implied prospective reading and secondly that in verbal compounds V2 does not necessarily express the achievement of a result itself, but can have purposive meaning, i.e. 'V1 is done in order to achieve V2'. This purposive component can be overtly expressed by *hai²* 'give, let; CAUS, FIN', but here again the overt marking is not obligatory. This accounts for the atelic reading in (3.20) above of the verbal compound *khaa² tuə taai* 'kill self', which can be interpreted as 'kill self in order to die'. Nothing is said about the result being achieved or not, though in an unmarked context it is implicated that the result is achieved.

We can state that telicity in Thai is not inherent in the verbal semantics except for the punctual verbs, which do not include a period but only a transformation. There are situations corresponding to accomplishments, but an adequate context can always cancel the telicity of these, highlighting only the situation leading to the transformation and sometimes even exclude the transformation. We may therefore postulate different tendencies of durative verbs, namely verbs denoting situations without prominent borders, with equally prominent initial and final borders, with prominent initial borders and with prominent final borders.

The easiest way to determine the semantic tendency of a given verbal expression is by applying it to the sentence ... *toon saam³ moon* '... at three

o'clock' or ... *muə² wansuk¹* '... last Friday'. Compare the default interpretations of the sentences below without marked context.

- (3.25) *khau⁴ khaa² wuə muə² wansuk¹.*
 3hum kill cow when Friday
 'He killed a cow last Friday.' ⇒ final limit prominent

- (3.26) *khau⁴ lap¹ tɔɔn sii¹ thum².*
 3hum asleep TEMP our evening.hour
 'He fell asleep at three p.m.' ⇒ initial limit prominent

- (3.27) *phom⁴ kin khaau² tɔɔn pɛt¹ moon.*
 1sm eat rice TEMP eight o'clock
 'I eat/ate at eight o'clock.' ⇒ both limits equally prominent

3.4 Phasal verbs - verbal phases

Phasal verbs are used to add boundaries and phases to verbal expressions. I include in the class of phasal verbs all verbal auxiliaries that are used in combination with other verbs to add and/or put focus on one phase or point of their semantic structure. In this sense, the group of V2 that have a telicising function forms a subclass of the phasal verbs. Many of the aspect markers discussed in section 4 overlap with or have arisen from phasal verbs. The main difference between phasal auxiliaries and TAM markers is the degree of grammaticalisation. The phasal auxiliaries generally retain their verbal semantics, while the markers are more grammaticalised.

The most typical phasal verbs are 'begin' and 'stop'. In Thai, these are widely used, even in situations where the verbal semantics and/or the context are sufficient to suggest a specific reading:

- (3.28) *lan⁴ caak¹ theɛŋ³ luuk² khon rɛk² kuəp¹ pii, diŋ¹chan⁴*
 after ABL miscarry child CL_{hum} first almost year 1sfhon
kɔ² rɔɔm² taŋ² khan ʔiik¹ khran³.
 COMM begin set.up womb more time
 'Almost a year after I had lost my first child, I became pregnant again.' (PL:11)

The expression *taŋ² khan* 'set up a womb/pregnancy, conceive a child' clearly includes a starting point; the phasal auxiliary *rɔɔm²* here only reinforces the inchoative reading. The same goes for (3.29), with *pɔɔt¹* 'open' being a typical verb with prominent initial border.

- (3.29) suuk¹saa⁴phanphaanit³ rɔ̌m² pɔ̌t¹ bɔ̌rikaan tan²tɛɛ¹
 Sueksaphanphanich begin open service since
 nuuŋ¹ meesa⁴yon 2543.
 one April 2000
 'Sueksaphanphanich will be open from April 1st, 2000.'
 (advertisement of the opening of a shop in Bangkok)

The opposite of *rɔ̌m*² is *hɔ̌k*² 'stop, finish, cease', which only indicates that an activity is ending, without reference to its outcome. In other words, the final boundary is reached, independent of whether it is the crucial boundary (transformation) or not.

- (3.30) phom⁴ hɔ̌k² ʔaan¹ nan⁴suuu⁴ tɔ̌n/tan²tɛɛ¹ thiəŋ².
 Ism finish read book TEMP/since noon
 'I stopped reading at noon.'

In order to add information about the result, we have to change *hɔ̌k*² into *set*¹ 'finish' to indicate that a set portion of the reading has been finished, *cop*¹ 'end' if the whole book has been read or *mot*¹ 'all' if all books that had to be read have actually been read.

The phasal verbs therefore not only choose a certain phase of the action, but add a boundary. Aspect markers are added to indicate the role of this boundary, i.e. whether it has been transgressed, will be reached soon, etc. With punctual verbs, *rɔ̌m*² indicates the beginning, *hɔ̌k*² the end of a habit, suggesting iterative reading.

3.5 The basic verb classes in Thai

We have established on the preceding pages two major verb classes: PUNCTUAL and non-punctual (DURATIVE) verbs. The durative verbs do not form a homogenous class but rather a continuum of verbs with different tendencies of prominent boundaries.

The context, auxiliaries, and aspect markers can set boundaries and phases and focus on them, producing verbal expressions with telic, initio-transformative, stative and punctual interpretations. The three main determining factors setting and choosing boundaries or phases in a given verbal expression are thus

1. The context (both linguistic and extra-linguistic)
2. Phasal auxiliaries
3. TAM markers.

We can conclude that some kind of aktionsart is present in Thai, but it is very underspecified. There are two verbal categories that can be established by

language internal formal means, but the pragmatics remain an important factor in determining the interpretation.

The next chapter is dedicated to the main aspect markers in modern Thai and their interaction with the different verb types.

4 The main aspect markers in Thai

In this section I will present the main aspect markers in Thai, together with their meaning, use and restrictions. Some of them have already been dealt with in Boonyapatipark (1983). The markers are arranged in groups according to their use. It must be noted, however, that the categories 'imperfective', 'perfective' and 'perfect' are not clear-cut categories in Thai. The classification of the Thai aspect markers is only partly adequate and applied here for reasons of convenience. Many of the markers under discussion do not correspond in their function(s) to one of these categories alone.

1. 'Imperfective' markers
 - a. *yuu*¹, a postverbal TEMPORARY aspect marker
 - b. *pai*, a postverbal CONTINUATIVE marker
 - c. *yaŋ*, a preverbal PERSISTIVE marker
 - d. *kamlay*, a preverbal PROGRESSIVE marker
2. 'Perfective' marker
 - a. *dai*², a preverbal PERFECTIVE marker
3. 'Perfect' markers
 - a. *leeu*³, a postverbal marker for 'NEW SITUATIONS'
 - b. *maa*, a postverbal PERFECT marker
4. The prospective marker
 - a. *caŋ*⁴ ~ *ca*, a preverbal PROSPECTIVE marker

Of these aspect markers, all but *kamlay* and *caŋ*⁴ are also used as full verbs in standard Thai or have developed from verbs. Where the use as a full verb is not present in the standard language anymore, it is often found in closely related dialects. Given the fact that most aspect markers still retain their transparent semantics, it is difficult, if not impossible, in many instances to decide whether we are dealing with a verb with its own semantics or with a grammaticalised TAM marker. It also has to be kept in mind that absolute verb classes can hardly be established, i.e. TAM markers and the context can influence the classification of a given verbal expression. Most of the aspect markers are therefore not selective, i.e. they do not only select a part of the

semantic structure of a verb (or verbal expression), but they very often add meaning to it, both modal and aspectual.

4.1 The markers of the 'imperfective' group

The imperfective aspect is characterised by its reference to the internal temporal structure of a situation. The imperfective does not necessarily have to form a homogenic category in a language. To this we might add that there are markers in some languages that only partly correspond to imperfective meaning, while other functions of the same markers are classified rather as perfective or modal than as imperfective. One such example is *pai* (s. below), which covers part of the imperfective, but has other uses with rather perfective meaning.

In Thai, the imperfective is not expressed in a single category, but divided into different subcategories, namely temporary, continuative, persistive, progressive and habitual aspects.

yuu'

yuu' as a full verb means 'be at, stay, live, remain at'. As a postverbal auxiliary it has been described as 'present tense' (Thonglor 1978:247) or as 'continuative' marker (Boonyapatipark 1983:99ff.). Noss gives as meaning of the auxiliary *yuu'* "remaining on the scene, unchanged, action continuing, temporary, without necessary future significance" (1964:186). I suggest the label 'temporary aspect'⁸ for *yuu'*, as the temporary component seems to be dominant. *yuu'* indicates that the right limit of the situation has not been reached yet. This accounts for the incompatibility of *yuu'* with verbs denoting irreversible situations without possible end point, e.g. *kɛɛ'* 'be old' as opposed to *num'* 'be young (man)'.

Furthermore, *yuu'* does not cooccur with punctual verbs. *yuu'*-clauses are often used to describe the background of a narrative.

- (4.1) siəŋ⁴ phuut² siəŋ⁴ khui nai muu¹ khondooisaan⁴ suŋ²
 sound speak sound chat in group passenger REL
 daŋ yuu¹ muə² ruə² rɛɛm² ʔɔk¹ caak¹ thaa² nan³
 loud TMPR when boat start exit ABL jetty that
 khɔi²khɔi² ŋjəp² pai.
 gradually quiet go
 'Voices chatting when the boat left the jetty gradually faded.'⁹
 (LC:1; ML:1)

⁸ Cf. Bickel (1996:113ff) for discussion of a form with similar function in Belhare.

⁹ In the examples from 'Many Lives' where appropriate I use the English translation by Borthwick (1996).

In (4.1) the situation at one specific point in time ('when the boat left the jetty') is described, and at that point the talking and chatting, that is likely to have started some time earlier, goes on, but a possible endpoint is conceivable (and actually reached here).

yuu' occurs with expressions of a specific point in time in topic position, as in (4.2). In (4.3), the period covered by *yuu'* is 'a very long time':

- (4.2) *muə²waan tɔn baai¹ moon¹ phom¹ tham kap¹*
 yesterday TEMP afternoon o'clock 1sm do with
khaau²¹ yuu
 rice TMPR
 'Yesterday at 1 p.m. I was cooking.'

- (4.3) *tat¹sin⁴cai yuu¹ naan thiidiəu kwaa¹cə mun⁴ thoorəsap¹*
 decide TMPR long.time very before PROS dial telephone
pai haa⁴ khunyiŋ⁴ saa⁴raai¹.
 go look.for lady Sarai
 'It took her a very long time to make up her mind and call lady Sarai.'
 (LR: 86)

More restricted, if not impossible, is the use of *yuu'* with broader expressions of time like 'yesterday', 'last year', etc., as can be seen in the ungrammaticality of examples (4.4) and (4.5).

- (4.4) **muə²waan phom⁴ ʔaan¹ naŋ⁴suu⁴ yuu¹.*
 yesterday 1sm read book TMPR
 'Yesterday I was reading.'
- (4.5) **pii thii²leəu³khau⁴ pen khruu yuu¹.*
 year previous 3hum be teacher TMPR
 'Last year, he was a teacher.'

Both sentences are acceptable only if an adverbial expression is added:

- (4.6) *muə²waan phom⁴ ʔaan¹ naŋ⁴suu⁴ yuu¹ baan² thaŋ³ wan.*
 yesterday 1sm read book TMPR/stay house INCL day
 'Yesterday I spent the whole day reading at home.'
- (4.7) *pii thii²leəu³khau⁴ pen khruu yuu¹, tee¹ tɔn nii³ ʔɔk¹ leəu³.*
 year previous 3hum be teacher TMPRbut TEMP this exit NSIT
 'Last year, he was a teacher, but now he quit.'

The use of *yuu*¹ with future reference is not very common, but not excluded, as seen in (4.8)

- (4.8) *thaa*² *khun* *mai*² *pɔ̌ɔt*¹ *prətuu* *baan*², *phom*⁴ *cə*
 if 2hon NEG open door house 1sm PROS
*naŋ*² *rɔɔ* *yuu*¹ *than*³ *khutun*.
 sit wait TMPR INCL night
 'If you don't open the house door, I am going to sit and wait for you all night.' (LR:470)

Another use of *yuu*¹ is with expressions of habituality, with or without overt habitual marker. In this case, *yuu*¹ denotes a habit that is restricted in time and holds for sure only for the period described.

- (4.9) *mee*² *khɔɔŋ*⁴ *seem*⁴ *kɔ*² *bon*¹ *thuŋ*⁴
 mother POSS S. COMM complain about
*khwaam-yaak*² *con* *yuu*¹ *pen* *prəcam* *thuk*³ *wan*.
 NML-poor TMPR be permanent every day
 'Sem's mother continued to complain daily of her poverty.' (LC:46, ML:28)

pai 'go'

pai 'go' is widely used as a full verb denoting a motion away from the point of reference, usually the now and here for the speaker. As an orientation verb after the main verb it expresses a motion away from the speaker and towards a goal, which it introduces. *pai* can be considered either transitive (as in (4.10), where the use of *pai* is obligatory) or intransitive (in (4.11)).

- (4.10) *khau*⁴ *dɔ̌ɔn* *pai* *rooŋriən*.
 3hum walk go school
 'He walks to school.'
- (4.11) *khau*⁴ *ʔɔɔk*¹ *pai* *taŋ*² *tee*¹ *thiən*².
 3hum exit go since noon
 'He left at noon.'

The original meaning of *pai* is always present in its function as TAM marker. Its semantic scope as TAM marker varies from 'continuative' (i.e. away from the present moment into the future) to 'completed' and 'away from speaker or his interest'. *pai* combines with all verb classes, though its application is restricted in some combinations, especially where a spatial movement towards the speaker is involved.

***pai* as continuative marker.** In the function of a continuative marker, *pai* is often accompanied by *tɔɔ'* 'connect, link, continue'. In (4.12) *pai* could be replaced by *yuu'* without an obvious change in meaning.

- (4.12) khunyiŋ⁴ saa⁴raai¹ niŋ² **pai** khruu² nuŋ¹.
 lady Sarai still go(CONT)moment one
 'Lady Sarai remained silent for a moment.' (LR:730)

Unlike *yuu'*, *pai* can express an extension of time into the future. In (4.13), the use of *yuu'* would lead to ungrammaticality:

- (4.13) hai² nak³riən ʔaan¹ naŋ⁴suu⁴ **pai** (*yuu¹) ʔiik¹
 CAUS students read book go(CONT) more
 yii²sip¹ naathii.
 twenty minute
 'The students have to keep reading in their books for another twenty minutes.'

But compare the very similar sentence in (4.14), where both *pai* and *yuu'* can be used. The interpretation is not quite the same, though. While *yuu'* describes the situation as completed, past, *pai* may indicate a continuance into the future.

- (4.14) nak³riən ʔaan¹ naŋ⁴suu⁴ **yuu'** / **pai** ʔiik¹ yii²sip¹ naathii.
 student read book TMPR / CONT more twenty minute
 'The students kept reading for another twenty minutes.'

In sentences with *yuu'* as a full verb, *pai* is usually the only option to express a continuing situation:

- (4.15)a. *khau⁴ yuu¹ muəŋ thai **yuu'** ruəi²ruəi²
 3hum stay country Thai TMPRcontinuously
 b. khau⁴ yuu¹ muəŋ thai **pai** ruəi²ruəi².
 3hum stay country Thai go(CONT)continuously.
 'He is/keeps staying in Thailand (for the time being, until some change comes).'

With duratives without prominent limits, *pai* usually expresses an increasing degree of the situation or introduces a starting point of the situation. In (4.1) above we saw the expression *siəŋ⁴ nan³ khɔi² khɔi² ɣiəp² pai* 'the voices gradually faded', lit. 'the voices gradually went silent'. In this sentence the degree of 'silence' is increasing. In (4.16), *pai* indicates the beginning of the state:

- (4.16) muə² khruu khau² maa nai hən²riən, nak³riən kə²
 when teacher enter come in classroom student COMM
 ɲiəp² **pai** thanthii.
 quiet go at.once
 'When the teacher entered the classroom, the students went quiet at once.'

Even if *pai* and/or *thanthii* are absent, the meaning remains unchanged. The context makes it clear enough (or suggests it clearly enough) that the students had been chatting before the teacher entered and stopped the moment he came in. It is important to notice in this connection that the context, also extralinguistic, can determine the exact interpretation of a given situation, adding aspectual values that are not present in the verbal semantics.

***pai* as marker of action away from centre of interest.** This use of *pai* is rather modal than aspectual, though it cannot be clearly separated from other uses of the TAM marker *pai*. A typical example is given in (4.17), which contrasts with (4.18), where the other orientation verb *maa* is used instead. (4.17) implies that the speaker is not going to listen to what the addressee is going to say, whereas in (4.18) he will listen to it. In (4.17), the sound goes away from the hearer's ears, therefore *pai* is the obvious choice here.

- (4.17) yaak¹ phuut² ʔərai kə² phuut² **pai** thɤʔ¹.
 DES speak what COMM speak go IMPER
 'If you want to say something, go on, speak!' (LR:573)

- (4.18) pai nai⁴ maa[?] phuut² **maa** lɤʔi.
 go where come speak come EMPH
 'Where have you been? Tell me right away!'

In (4.19) the first instance of *pai* indicates continuative, whereas the second one implies rather that the action is away from the centre of interest, in this case Vibhat. The expression *lap¹ pai* also denotes the completion of the event, therefore taking rather perfective meaning.

- (4.19) koomeet² khui **pai** dai² ʔiik¹ khruu² diəu, khau⁴
 K. chat go(CONT) get more moment single 3hum
 kə² lap¹ **pai** thiŋ³ hai² wi[?]phaat² nɔɔn khit³ ʔərai
 COMM asleep go leave CAUS V. lie think what
 tɔɔ¹ ʔərai ruəi²puəi¹ yuu¹ taamlamphaŋ
 connect what aimlessly stay alone
 'Komet went on chatting for a moment and then fell asleep, leaving Vibhat lying alone, thinking aimlessly.' (LR:85)

In past time contexts, *pai* is often replaced by *maa*, which expresses a kind of perfect (cf. below). As seen in (4.17) and (4.18), *pai* can be used in imperative (and prohibitive) contexts. It is rarely used in negated contexts.

yaŋ

As a full verb, *yaŋ* has been replaced in Standard Thai by *yuu*¹ 'be at, stay' and *mii* 'there is, have', but it is found as a full verb in some related languages such as Aiton in Assam.

In Thai, *yaŋ* has a wide range of meanings, including 'still, yet, anyway; towards; have you ... yet?, not yet (as answer)'. Here its use as a 'persistive' aspect marker will be discussed. As such it is closely related in use to the temporary marker *yuu*¹, with which it often combines.

As persistive marker, *yaŋ* expresses an old situation that still holds at the time of reference. It is therefore the opposite of *leeu*³ which expresses a new situation (cf. below). In this function *yaŋ* is not readily compatible with punctual verbs and duratives expressing situations without possible right limit, like *kee*¹ 'be old'. It does not make sense to speak of a state as still holding, if there is no possibility for it to end. 'He is still old' sounds odd at the very least. Where *yaŋ* occurs with verbs of these restricted classes, its natural interpretation is 'anyway'. In this case the clause is usually preceded by the comment marker *ko*².

- (4.20) *thuŋ*⁴ *cə* *dɔŋn* *chaa*³, *ko*² *yaŋ* *thuŋ*⁴ *baan* *yuu*¹.
 although PROS walk slow COMM PERS reach house TMPR
 'Even though he walks slowly, he still reaches the house.'

With other verb classes, *yaŋ* expresses that the situation remains unchanged for the time being:

- (4.21) *khau*⁴ *yaŋ* *tham* *ŋaan* *yuu*¹ *thii*² *dɔŋm*.
 3hum PERS do work TMPRLOC original
 'He still works at the same place (as before).'

- (4.22) *saam*⁴ *sip*¹ *yaŋ* *suai*⁴.
 thirty PERS pretty
 'At thirty, she is still beautiful' (Lyrics from a popular Thai song)

The interpretation as 'unchanged situation' also holds in negative sentences, as can be seen in (4.23).

- (4.23) *khau*⁴ *yaŋ* *mai*² *maa* *lɔŋi*.
 3hum PERS NEG come EMPH
 'He hasn't come yet.'

The negative *yaŋ mai*² freely combines with durative (4.24) and punctual (4.25) verbs, but is not used with duratives that lack a conceivable starting point or state preceding them.

- (4.24) suə² tuə nii³ yaŋ chai³ dai² yuu¹, yaŋ mai² kau¹.
 shirt CL_{body} this PERS use POT TMPR PERS NEG old
 'This shirt is still good, it isn't old yet.'

- (4.25) kɛu² bai nii³ yaŋ mai² tɛk¹.
 glass CL_{round} this PERS NEG break
 'This glass isn't broken yet.'

The negative construction *yaŋ mai*² in (4.24) must be analyzed as 'the state of not being old persists' or 'it is still the case that it is not old'. The scope of the negative *mai*² in Thai is always only the verb or verbal compound immediately following it, while the scope of *yaŋ* includes the whole clause following it. In other words, *yaŋ* cooccurs with negated verbal expressions, but it is not negatable itself.

yaŋ can not be used in imperative and prohibitive clauses.

kamlan

One of the few TAM markers that have no verbal origin is *kamlan*, a loan from Khmer. The development of *kamlan* is obscure. In Khmer, *kamlan* 'strength' is the nominalisation of the stative verb *khlan* 'strong, loud'. In Thai, the nominal form *kamlan* is used in the sense of 'strength, power'. Very recent is its use as a progressive marker. It is not found in older literature and in the dialects it is considered Bangkokian influence (cf. Rungrueangsri 1991:78). Many educated Thais see *kamlan* as newly introduced means to translate the English continuous forms, with which it shares many features and of which it is a standard translation. Today *kamlan* competes and cooccurs with the 'real Thai' TAM markers *yuu*¹ and *ca?*¹, which it tends to replace in some modern styles.

Most typically, *kamlan* occurs with verbs denoting dynamic situations and processes, but its use is not restricted to these. There are actually only very few verbs in Thai that do not cooccur with *kamlan*, e.g. *ruu*³ 'know sth.', *ruu*³ *cak*¹ 'know so.' and *luu*^{um} 'forget'. A possible explanation for this restriction is that these verbs lack a conceivable process that *kamlan* can focus on.

The marker *kamlan* focuses on a shorter, more specific period than *yuu*¹. It is therefore not compatible with underspecified time expressions or extended periods of time and can not have a habitual reading. The focus with *kamlan* is clearly on the present moment, and it usually implies a dynamic (cf. Greek *dynamis* 'power, strength', *kamlan* 'id.') rather than a stative situation. Whenever used with verbs denoting otherwise rather stative situations, the

implication is that the situation holds only for the very restricted period under consideration.

- (4.26) *phom*⁴ ***kamləŋ*** *yaak*¹ *maa* *tham* *ŋaan* *thii*²*nii*² *baaŋ*².
 1sm PROG DES come do work here also
 'Right now, I would like to come and work here, too.' (LR:344)

The focus on a dynamic process is particularly obvious with durative verbs with prominent left limit ('initiotransformatives'). Whereas *yuu*¹ focuses on the state, *kamləŋ* rather chooses the action leading to the state. In (4.27) the focus on the process is reinforced by the V2 *chaa*³*chaa*³ 'slowly'. Both (4.28) and (4.29) are theoretically ambiguous.

- (4.27) *prətuu* *baan*² ***kamləŋ*** *pɔɔt*¹ *chaa*³*chaa*³.
 door house PROG open slow:RDP
 'The house door is opening slowly.'
- (4.28) *rot*³*mee* ***kamləŋ*** *cɔɔt*¹ *naa*² *rooŋriən*.
 bus PROG park front school
 'The bus is parking in front of the school building.' (less natural:
 'The bus is parked right now in front of the school building.')
- (4.29) *khau*⁴ ***kamləŋ*** *sai*¹ *kaaŋkeen* *yuu*¹.
 3hum PROG wear pants TMPR
 'He is putting on his pants.' (rare: 'He is wearing pants right now.')

With punctual verbs, *kamləŋ* or *kamləŋ cə* indicates that the event is imminent, similar to the use of the English continuous form. The focus is on the process leading up to the event.

- (4.30) *ton*²*maai*³ *nii*³ ***kamləŋ*** *taai*.
 tree this PROG die
 'This tree is dying/going to die.'

With duratives lacking prominent limits, *kamləŋ* usually expresses a limited period for which the state holds, implying that it has not been before and will not be so later, i.e. it adds initial and final limits to the verb, similar to the English use of the continuous form. In some contexts with duratives that otherwise have a rather stative interpretation, *kamləŋ* results in a reading as 'increasing degree of state at the moment under consideration', while in other contexts it merely limits the state temporally. Compare the different interpretations of the duratives with *kamləŋ* in (4.31) - (4.34)

- (4.31) thaai¹ ruup² reu noi¹ si¹, **kamlaŋ** loo¹ (yuu¹).
 take picture fast little IMPER PROG handsome TMPR
 'Hurry up, take the picture now, I'm just being handsome.'
 [temporary state]
- (4.32) ʔau², maa kin khaau² kan, keeŋ **kamlaŋ** roon³ (yuu¹).
 INTJ come eat rice REC curry PROG hot TMPR
 'Hey, come and eat now, the food is hot.' [temporary state]
- (4.33) dek¹ **kamlaŋ** too ko² toŋ² kin khaau² yʉʉ³.
 child PROG big COMM must eat rice a.lot
 'The child is growing up, so he has to eat a lot.' [increasing degree]
- (4.34) loon¹ **kamlaŋ** suai⁴, phuu² chaai ko² lʉʉi choop².
 3f PROG pretty person male COMM CONS like
 'She is being pretty, therefore men like her.' [temporary state]
 'She is getting pretty, therefore men like her.' [increasing degree]

Whereas in (4.33) only the interpretation as 'getting taller, growing up' is possible, in (4.34) we have two alternative readings, given the fact that 'be pretty' is a state that may end some day, while 'be tall, big' is bound to remain unreverted for the rest of one's life.

kamlaŋ and yuu¹

Boonyapatipark dedicates a whole chapter of her study to the similarities and differences between the two forms (1983:107 ff.). She comes to the conclusion that the difference is one between "progressive" (*kamlaŋ*) and "continuative" (*yuu¹*). I accept Boonyapatipark's distinction, but prefer labeling *yuu¹* as "temporary" rather than "continuative" aspect marker.

Although they are, at first sight, similar in meaning and are often both treated as progressive markers, *yuu¹* and *kamlaŋ* exhibit some important differences. For instance, *kamlaŋ* is not compatible with time expressions like 'until, up to'. Only *yuu¹* can be used in these constructions.

- (4.35) phom⁴ (***kamlaŋ**) roo yuu¹ con thuŋ⁴ thiŋ².
 1sm (PROG) wait TMPR until reach noon
 'I've been waiting until noon.'

As noted above, with durative verbs with prominent initial limit, *kamlaŋ* focuses on the dynamic event (cf. (4.28) above), while *yuu¹* focuses on the ensuing state, though the alternative readings can be construed with an adequate context.

- (4.36) rot³ cɔt¹ yuu¹ naa² baan².
 car park TMPR face house
 'The car is parked in front of the house.'
 less natural: 'The car is parking in front of the house.'

In (4.37), *kamləŋ* is used in combination with *yuu¹* to indicate a dynamic situation that holds only for a restricted time (but reoccurs every day).

- (4.37) khun mɛɛ² lau² waa² thuk³ wan diʔ¹chan⁴cə khui
 PREF mother tell SUB every day 1phon PROS chat
 khon diəu muən⁴ **kamləŋ** len² yuu¹ kap¹ khrai baəŋ khon.
 CL_{hum} single same PROG play TMPRwith who some CL_{hum}
 'My mother told me that every day I would chat alone, just as if I were playing with someone.' (PL:23)

With punctual verbs, only *kamləŋ*, but not *yuu¹* can be used. The verb *ruu³* 'know', on the other hand, is not compatible with *kamləŋ*, but very well with *yuu¹*, while both *ruu³ cak¹* 'know so.' and *luum* 'forget' are compatible with neither. These restrictions need further investigation.

4.2 The 'perfective' marker

The perfective aspect views the situation from outside as a unit, without considering its internal structure. Typically the perfective markers focus on limits (situation changes) rather than on the state or situation. This marker covers only parts of the perfective spectrum. Other auxiliaries with (partly) perfective function include the ingressive marker *khun² maa* and the relinquitive marker *wai³*.

dai²

As a full verb, *dai²* means 'get, receive'. It is used as postverbal auxiliary expressing potentiality or successful outcome of the activity expressed by the main verb. This use, which can be seen in (4.39) is a grammaticalisation of its meaning 'get'.

- (4.38) khau⁴ **dai²** ŋɿn phɔɔ² duən laʔ³ haa² phan baat¹.
 3hum get money father month DISTR five thousand Baht
 'He gets five thousand Baht from his father per month.'

- (4.39) khau⁴ ʔau naŋ⁴suu⁴ **dai²**.
 3hum take book get(>POT)
 'He can take the book.'

The use of *dai*² as V2 has been expanded to verbs the semantics of which are not related to the meaning 'get', resulting in a purely potential reading:

- (4.40) *khau*⁴ *paiduu* *naŋ*⁴ ***dai***².
 3hum go look movie POT
 'He can go to the movies.'

In preverbal position, the meaning of *dai*² is rather different. Usually it is described as a marker for "past tense" (Thonglor 1987:247; Royal Institute:310; Bisang 1992:349). The exact use of the preverbal marker *dai*² needs more detailed investigation. It is clearly not restricted to past tense contexts, as its cooccurrence with the prospective marker *ca*² shows:

- (4.41) *book*¹ *na*²*le*¹ *dii*, *ca* ***dai***² *ruu*³ *wai*³ *maŋ*².
 tell EMPH good PROS get know RLNQ some
 'It's just as well if you tell me, so I can keep it in mind.' (LR:492)

In this example, *dai*² seems to express a possibility to do something, rather than the successful execution of the action, which is expressed by the postverbal *dai*².

The use of the preverbal *dai*² is especially interesting with durative verbs with prominent initial limit, where it makes a distinction between the action and the ensuing state. *dai*² regularly refers to the action, not the state. Compare the different meanings of the sentences in (4.42)

- (4.42)a. *kap*¹ *khaau*² *ʔun*¹ *yaŋ*?
 with rice warm Q
 'Is the food warm yet?', 'Have you warmed up the food yet?'
 b. *ʔun*¹ *leu*³. / *yaŋ* *mai*² *ʔun*¹.
 warm NSIT PERS NEG warm
 'It's warm already.' / 'It's not warm yet.'
 c. ***dai***² *ʔun*¹ *leu*³. / *yaŋ* *mai*² ***dai***² *ʔun*¹.
 get warm NSIT PERS NEG get warm
 'I have warmed it up already.' / 'I haven't warmed it up yet.'¹⁰

As the use of *dai*² with verbs with prominent initial limit shows, *dai*² chooses the first boundary of the situation, not the state. Choosing the initial situation change is probably the main function of *dai*², adding a connotation of potentiality. If the initial limit is not a prominent one, *dai*² adds prominence to it merely by choosing it, as can be seen in sentences with verbs with a rather stative meaning.

¹⁰ These interpretations are also possible in (4.42b), but not *vice versa*.

- (4.43) *khəyan⁴ riən naʔ³, cə dai² keŋ¹.*
 diligent learn EMPH PROS get clever
 'Study diligently, so you'll be clever.' ('in order to get clever')

dai² is very frequent in negated sentences. The exact function of *mai² dai²* as opposed to the simple *mai²* is not clear (cf. Bisang 1992:349). Note that *dai²* is sometimes used in prohibitive clauses, especially in poetic or sentimental contexts, but it does not occur in imperative clauses. *dai²* with negated verbs is especially common in connection with the prospective marker *caʔ¹* as in *cə dai² mai² maa* 'so I won't have to come'.

4.3 The 'perfect' markers

The perfect is an aspect category that expresses a past situation with present relevance. Comrie speaks of an aspectual category 'perfect' (1995:56ff) but divides it into 'perfect of result', 'experiential perfect', 'perfect of persistent situation' and 'perfect of recent past'. Of these types, Thai expresses the 'experiential' regularly with the marker *khəŋri*, while the orientation verb *maa* 'come' is used to express the 'perfect of persistent situation' and 'recent past', and *leeu³* is used, among other functions, to cover the 'resultative'.

In Johanson's terminology, the 'perfect' forms part of the class of 'postterminality', which is, however, less restricted than the 'perfect' (Johanson 2000:177). The label 'postterminal' probably covers the functions of the following markers more adequately than 'perfect', although the use of 'terminal' is a potential source for misunderstandings due to its closeness to terms like 'terminative', which imply a crucial right limit.

leeu³

One of the most discussed TAM markers of Thai is *leeu³*, which is used in a wide range of functions. Earlier studies of the Thai verbal system describe *leeu³* in a variety of ways.¹¹

¹¹ In his *Shan and English Dictionary*, Cushing describes the corresponding Shan verb/auxiliary in the following way:

yau⁵ v. * *yir⁵* to be done, finished; *v part.* denoting the past; *also* the completion of the beginning of an act, as, *maa⁴ yau⁵* 'he is coming.' (Cushing 1914:528)

A particle with similar function is also found in Burmese. Okell describes it as follows:

pi/pa - Verb sentence marker [...] indicates arrival at the point of fulfilment in relation to a given time, hence translatable as 'is V-ing now, has V-ed, is V-ed by now'. [...] *pi* is used with verbs when the action or state they express is regarded as having a point of fulfilment or realisation which is approached by degrees with the passage of time. Further, this progress is considered in relation to a certain point of time, usually the time of speaking. *pi* indicates that at or before this time ('by now') the point of fulfilment has been reached. (Okell 1969:382f)

Boonyapatipark treats the TAM marker *leeu*³ as “a marker of perfectivity” (1983:158) and states that

*leeu*³ indicates that a crucial amount of some activity has been carried out, a crucial point of a situation has been reached (not necessarily the completion point), i.e. a change to or arrival at a new situation has come about, at the time of reference. (ibid.)

She arrives at three different functions of *leeu*³, which are quoted and summarised by Bisang (1992:358):

1. Full verb ‘finished’
2. TAM marker
 - a. Completive
 - b. Inchoative
 - c. Imminent
 - d. New situation.
3. Conjunctional verb (sequential marker)

A summary of earlier treatments of *leeu*³ is given by Boonyapatipark (1983:149ff).

***leeu*³ as a full verb.** As a full verb, *leeu*³ is not used in Standard Thai anymore, except for some idiomatic expressions. That *leeu*³ does not have full verbal character anymore is shown by its incompatibility with the negation marker *mai*²: **yaŋ mai² lee³* ‘not finished yet’.

***leeu*³ as TAM marker.** The original meaning of *leeu*³ as ‘finish’, though not in current use anymore, is still known to native speakers. Many of its present functions are more or less easily explained on the basis of this original meaning. Generally *leeu*³ denotes the new (but expected) situation after a limit has been transgressed (hence the label ‘new situation’¹²). In unmarked contexts, it is the most prominent limit of the verbal expression that has been transgressed. The limit that has been passed can be purely temporal, transformative or quantitative, as will be seen below. Although *leeu*³ needs a limit, it does not itself focus on this limit, but on the ensuing state of affairs. Therefore *leeu*³ is not compatible with specific time adverbials. Where it cooccurs with time expressions like ‘at 3 o’clock’ (usually in topic position), the statement is that at this time the situation has come into being. The transgression of the limit itself can not be selected with specific time adverbials in *leeu*³-clauses.

¹² An alternative term would be ‘transgressive’ marker, indicating that any limit has been transgressed.

The interpretation as ‘completive’ is the most natural one with punctual verbs. As the event does not have temporal extension, *leeu*³ here indicates that the event (transformation) has taken place.

- (4.44) *khau*³ *thoo* *maa* *book*¹ *waa*² *thuŋ*⁴ *chiəŋmai*¹ *leeu*³.
 3hum telephone come tell SUB arrive Ch. NSIT
 ‘He called to say that he is in Chiangmai now.’

The same holds for situations with a prominent final limit, where *leeu*³ usually refers to the completion of the situation:

- (4.45) *khau*⁴ *tham* *kaanbaan*² *set*¹ *leeu*³.
 3hum do homework finish NSIT
 ‘He has finished his homework.’

- (4.46) *phom*⁴ *haa*⁴ *ŋyn* *cyr* *leeu*³.
 1sm look.for money find NSIT
 ‘I have found the money (I was looking for).’

With durative situations that do not suggest a telic reading, *leeu*³ usually refers to the completion of either the act itself or of its beginning, resulting in translations that sound like ‘progressive’ in English.

- (4.47) *khau*⁴ *tham* *ŋaan* *leeu*³.
 3hum do work NSIT
 ‘He has worked.’ or ‘He is working now.’
 (= ‘He has started working.’)

- (4.48) *chan*⁴ *mai*² *khit*³ *mii* *rɔok*¹, *khroɔp*² *khruə*, *phrɔʔ*³ *chan*⁴ *mii*
 1sfam NEG think have CEXP family because 1sfam have
*yuu*¹ *leeu*³.
 Tmpr NSIT
 ‘I don’t intend to have a family, because I’ve got one already.’
 (LC:145; ML:88)

If a verbal expression includes a prominent initial limit, *leeu*³ usually indicates that this limit has been transgressed.

- (4.49) *khau*⁴ *naŋ*² *toʔ*³ *leeu*³.
 3hum sit table NSIT
 ‘He is sitting at the table (now).’

In sentences including a quantitative expression, *leeu*³ indicates that this quantity has been reached or transgressed by the time of reference, as in (4.50).

Notice that the position of *leeu*³ is either after the verb phrase (verb + object), or after the quantifier phrase (numeral + classifier). The difference is one of emphasis.

- (4.50) phom⁴ kin heembaykay² **leeu**³ saw⁴ chin³/ saw⁴ chin³ **leeu**³
 1sm eat hamburger NSIT two CL_{piece} two CL_{piece} NSIT
 'I have eaten two hamburgers (so I am full now).'

The use of *leeu*³ is restricted in contexts where the event occurs later than expected. (4.51) is ungrammatical if we speak of the Monday following the Saturday he promised to come.

- (4.51) *khau⁴ book¹ waa² cə maa wansau⁴, le? wancan
 3hum tell SUB PROS come Saturday and Monday
 khau⁴ maa **leeu**³.
 3hum come NSIT
 'He said that he would come on Saturday, and he came on Monday.'

The inapplicability of *leeu*³ here is due to the fact that there is a word denoting events that occur later than expected, *phuy*² 'just now', which would be used in this case. *leeu*³ does not indicate a 'precocative' event, although its standard translation into English as 'already' might suggest this. If someone says at 7 p.m.

- (4.52) phom⁴ kin khaau² **leeu**³.
 1sm eat rice NSIT
 'I have eaten.', 'I am eating now.'

there is no necessary implication of his eating occurring earlier than expected. Even after landing at Bangkok airport with a delay of over an hour, the Thai announcement on Swissair flights is normally

- (4.53) saai⁴ kaanbin sawis³ ?ee dai² nam than² suu¹
 airline Swissair get lead 2hh ALL
 thaa² ?aakaat¹ səyaan krungtheep² riap² rəoi³ **leeu**³.
 airport Bangkok perfect NSIT
 'Swissair has brought you now to Bangkok airport.' (Swissair flights to Bangkok)

This announcement merely states that the new situation of having arrived is fully here now, independent of expectations about the time.

We have treated *yay* as a marker expressing that an old situation persists, that no change has occurred yet, although one might be expected. *leeu*³, on the other hand, indicates that a change has taken place and a new situation has

arisen. In this function *leeu*³ is the functional opposite of the persistive marker *yan*, which is shown very neatly in questions like (4.54).

- (4.54) a. *khau*⁴ *maa* (*leeu*³ *ruu*⁴) *yan*?
 3hum come (NSIT or) PERS
 ‘Has he come yet?’ or ‘Is he here yet?’
 b. *maa leeu*³ / *yan* (*mai*² *maa*).
 come NSIT / PERS (NEG come)
 ‘Yes.’ / ‘No.’

Denoting a situation after a situation change (‘new situation’), *leeu*³ is incompatible with verbs referring logically to original situations that are not preceded by any other situation. A sentence like **khau*⁴ *pen dek*¹ *leeu*³ ‘he is a child now’ is not possible in a natural setting (though very well so in a supposed science fiction novel, where people are born old and grow young). The contrastive factor of ‘new situation as opposed to old situation’ is rather dominant, so that *leeu*³-clauses rarely introduce new information, but express only that an expected situation has started or fully developed. Its use is thus mostly restricted to the change into an expected situation, although a few other examples can be found. The sentence (4.55) can only be uttered, if the arrival of Chai was expected by at least the speaker himself. (4.56) can be used to express surprise about Chai’s earlier than expected arrival, not about his coming as such.

- (4.55) *dii na*³, *chai maa leeu*³.
 good EMPHChai come NSIT
 ‘Good, Chai has come now.’
 (4.56) *pleek*¹ *dii na*³, *chai ko*² *maa leeu*³.
 strange good EMPH Chai COMM come NSIT
 ‘How strange, Chai is already here.’
 *‘How strange, Chai has come, too.’

The new situation has arisen definitely, though it is not necessarily the completion of an action. A helpful translation is ‘it is now the case that ... (it was not the case before)’.

As the change into the new situation has been completed, *leeu*³ often also has a connotation of ‘irreversible situation’. It is this connotation that is expressed in sentences where obviously new information is conveyed in a *leeu*³-clause, as shown in (4.57) and (4.58).

- (4.57) nan¹ maaliiman¹ yan¹ mai² ruu³ ruəŋ² lɔ̌i, waa²
 PREF Mali 3s PERS NEG know matter EMPH SUB
 mæe² man com naam³ taai **leeu**³.
 mother 3s drown water die NSIT
 'Mali doesn't even know yet that her mother has drowned (and died).' (PL:127)
- (4.58) tæe¹ wi³phaat² kɔ̌² lɛe hen⁴ ruu³dii siə⁴ **leeu**³.
 but V. COMM look see R. IRVS NSIT
 'But Vibhat had already seen Ruedi (it was too late for her to hide).' (LR:211)

In (4.58), the irreversibility of the situation is reinforced by the marker *siə*⁴ (lit. 'waste, get lost, break down').

In WH-questions, the use of *leeu*³ is restricted. It occurs only in questions about a quantity that has been reached by the time of asking. The quantifier here sets a limit on which *leeu*³ can focus. As WH-words like *khrai* 'who' are focal themselves, *leeu*³ can not put additional focus on the limits of the verbal expression.

- (4.59)a. *khrai maa **leeu**³?
 who come NSIT
 'Who has come?'
 b. maa kan kii¹ khon **leeu**³?
 come REC how.many CL_{hum} NSIT
 'How many people have come so far?'
 (4.60)a. *khun ʔaan¹ ʔərai **leeu**³?
 2hon read what NSIT
 'What have you read?'
 b. ʔaan¹ kii¹ naa² **leeu**³?
 read how.many page NSIT
 'How many pages have you read so far?'

In imperative clauses, *leeu*³ has to be replaced by *diəu*⁴*nii*³ 'now' or some similar expression. In prohibitive sentences, *ʔiik*¹ 'more, further' is used instead of *leeu*³.

In negated clauses, *leeu*³ retains its reading as 'new situation has arisen'. The interpretation of *mai*² *kin* *leeu*³ 'not eat *leeu*³' is 'the new situation is: I don't eat.'. Depending on the context, different translations result in English. If the speaker has already eaten something, the natural translation is 'I don't eat anymore (I did before)'. If he hasn't started eating yet, we get 'I don't want to eat anymore (I lost the appetite I had before)'. In this case, *kin* 'eat' again suggests prospective interpretation.

The most puzzling property of *leeu*³ is probably that in many instances it can have future reference (Boonyapatipark's 'imminent' reading). In this case it is usually, but not necessarily, combined with the prospective marker *ca?*¹ and/or an adverbial referring to the future.

- (4.61) *diəu*⁴ *wansau*⁴ *man* *kɔ*² *klap*¹ *maa* *leeu*³ *pai*
 moment Saturday 3s COMM return come NSIT go
*khɪt*³*thoŋ*⁴-*khɪt*³*thuŋ*⁴ *man* *thammai?* *diəu*⁴ *ʔiik*¹ *wan* *sɔŋ*⁴
 (rhyme-)miss 3s why moment more day two
wan *man* *kɔ*² *klap*¹ *maa* *leeu*³.
 day 3s COMM return come NSIT
 'On Saturday he will come back. Why do you miss him now? In only one or two days, he will be back.' (PL:60)

The adverbial *diəu*⁴ '(in a) moment' is often used to transpose a situation into the near future. The use of *leeu*³ here reinforces the (emotional) nearness of the return of the person. This undertone of *leeu*³ can be noted frequently, though it is not part of its semantics. The most plausible explanation of expressions where *leeu*³ is used in the sense of 'near future, imminent event' is again that 'prospectivity' does not have to be marked overtly, as seen above. A possible translation of (4.61) would then be 'it is the case now (it was not so before) that he is coming back soon...'. We have here another piece of evidence for the 'prospective phase' of verbal expressions.

***leeu*³ as sequential marker.** If *leeu*³ stands between two verbal expressions, the normal reading is 'A is finished, B follows', i.e. as sequential marker. Also intonationally a restructuring of the sentence has taken place, *leeu*³ being usually preceded rather than followed by a pause. This development is shown in examples (4.62) through (4.64), with changing position of intonational pauses indicated by commas.

- (4.62) *mua*² *dai*² *rɔŋ*³ *haai*² *pai* *leeu*³, *khwaam-ruu*³ *suuk*¹ *thii*² *ʔat*¹
 when get cry go NSIT NML-feel ATTR stuff
*nen*² *yuu*¹ *nai* *cai* *khɔi*² *banthau* *lon*
 compressed TMPR in heart gradually relieve DIR_{down}
*dai*² *maak*².
 POT much
 'After she had cried, the feeling that had been stuffed in her heart gradually grew easier.' (LR:328)

- (4.63) *thak*³ *sinaa* *naa*² *dɛŋ* *leeu*³ *siit*².
 T. face red SEQ pale
 'Thaksina's face first turned red and then white.' (LR:326)

- (4.64) looi yuun niŋ² yuu¹ ?iik¹ khruu² nuŋ¹, leeu³ kɔ²
 L. stand still TMPRmore moment one SEQ COMM
 roŋ³ takoon khuu² waa²; “?ai² suə⁴ thɔi⁴”.
 exclaim shout INGR SUB PREF bandit retreat
 ‘Loi stood still for a second, then shouted, “Bandit retreat!”’ (LC:34;
 ML:21)

After it is established as a sequential marker, *leeu*³ can stand in sentence initial position as in (4.65):

- (4.65) leeu³ thammai cuu¹cuu¹ man thuŋ⁴com naam³taai dai²
 SEQ why suddenly 3s reach drown water die POT
 la?² niə²?
 EMPH EMPH
 ‘And how can she so suddenly come to drown?’ (PL:127)

Conclusions for *leeu*³. Leaving away the very marginal use of *leeu*³ as a full verb, we get two main functions, which cannot be clearly kept apart, viz. *leeu*³ as a TAM marker and as a sequential conjunction. The four interpretations listed by Boonyapatipark for the TAM marker *leeu*³ can be united under the broad cover term ‘new situation’, from which the other readings can be deduced by contextual means. There seems to be no difference in the interpretation of *leeu*³ with the different verb classes as postulated by Boonyapatipark. The context, linguistic as well as extra-linguistic, remains the main factor of decision.

Using the postulated structure of Thai verbs, we can state that *leeu*³ indicates that any boundary has been passed and focuses on the ensuing state. It corresponds to Johanson’s ‘postterminal’ marker, whereas it must be stressed that we are not talking here of critical boundaries or transformations. The context is the main factor determining which limit is the one that has been passed. To unambiguously indicate that it is the final boundary that is in focus, usually a completive V2 such as *set*¹ ‘finish’ or a definite object is added. A phasal auxiliary like *rɔm*² ‘begin’ clearly puts focus on the initial limit.

If no overt marker is present, the normal interpretation is dependent on the semantics of the verbal expression. The reading as imminent future probably has its origin in the above mentioned inherent notation of ‘intention’ or ‘prospectivity’ of an action, which can result in readings as ‘imminent action, imminent event’. The interpretation of *khau*⁴ *phuut*² *leeu*³ as ‘he is going to speak right now’ would then be explained as ‘it is now a fact that he has the intention to speak’. The use as a sequential marker can be explained as ‘final boundary has been passed’, i.e. a new situation/event can follow.

maa

The orientation verb *maa* 'come, motion towards centre of attention' is used in the temporal perspective to express that a situation extends towards the centre of interest, i.e. the present time. It therefore acquires a perfect reading in many instances. It has to be noted though, that the spatial dimension, whenever available, is the dominant one. In the temporal dimension, *maa* expresses a situation that has started at some point in the past and has present relevance, though it does not necessarily have to persist at the present time. Some illustrating examples are given in (4.66) and (4.67) below.

- (4.66) luuk² tham ?ərai **maa**? suə² puən² mot¹.
 child do what PERF shirt dirty all

'What have you done, son? Your shirt is all dirty.'

- (4.67) seem⁴ rɔɔm² ruu³ cak¹ phin **maa** tee¹ yan dek¹.
 Sem start know Phin PERF since PERS child

'He had known her since they had played together as children.'
 (LC:46; ML:28)

maa is compatible with specific time expressions like 'at noon' as well as with 'since ...', i.e. *maa* can focus both on the situation change and the ensuing situation. If the verbal expression lacks prominent limits, the use of *maa* is restricted. It is in this case compatible only with time expressions like 'since ...' and 'for ... time' but not with specific time expressions.

- (4.68) khau⁴ ruəi **maa** tan² tee¹ (*tɔɔn) tham ɲaan boorisat¹ nan³.
 3hum rich PERF since (TEMP) do work company that
 'He has been rich since he started working for that company.'

- (4.69) lɔn¹ suəi⁴ **maa** naan leəu³.
 3f pretty PERF long.time NSIT
 'She has been pretty for a long time.'

The interpretation as an orientation verb is preferred in sentences like (4.70):

- (4.70) "wan nii mii ?ərai mai¹ mai¹ **maa** hai² duu ruu⁴ plaau¹?"
 day this have what new:RDP come FIN look or NEG
 "mii, tee¹ mai² dai² ?au **maa**."
 have but NEG get take come
 "Have you got anything new to show me today?" "Yes, I do, but I didn't bring it along." (LR:335)

As with most (or probably all) TAM markers, it has always to be kept in mind that for native speakers of Thai, we are dealing here with one morpheme with different uses, not with a group of homophonous morphemes. The translations and glosses often obscure this fact, as no handy cover term is usually available in English. In its use as perfect marker, *maa* cannot occur in imperative and prohibitive clauses.

4.4 The prospective marker

The prospective is the future analogue to the perfect. According to Trask (1996:223), the prospective “differs from other aspects of the future in that it does not necessarily express either a prediction or an intention”. Comrie (1995:64) states that the prospective is a form “where a state is related to some subsequent situation”, that is the present situation carries the seeds for the subsequent situation, without necessarily being imminent or near future. The ‘futurity factor’ of the prospective is relative, i.e. we are not talking about absolute future time reference.

caʔʰ

The origin of *caʔʰ* (and its colloquial preclitic form *cə*, which is used in normal speech) is not clear. A more formal variant is *cakʰ*, which occurs frequently in older texts. One might think of a connection with Burmese *saʰ*, spelt <ca>, ‘begin, start’, which has also been borrowed into Mon where it is used mostly as an auxiliary with ingressive meaning.

Thai *caʔʰ* is not used as a full verb, and it does not have verbal characteristics. The standard Dictionary of the Royal Institute lists it as ‘verbal auxiliary’ (*kham chuəiʰ kəriyaa*), not as ‘auxiliary verb’ (*kəriyaa chuəiʰ*) like, for example, *təŋʰ* ‘must’. The semantic range of *caʔʰ* is wide, including the notion of ‘future, intention, supposition, plan, habituality’. In this *caʔʰ* is not unlike the English ‘will, would’, by which it may well have been influenced¹³. A possible cover term for *caʔʰ* might be ‘irrealis’ as very often it does not refer to an actual situation. In the present study I prefer Boonyapatipark’s label as ‘prospective aspect’ (Boonyapatipark 1983:215ff), as this seems to most adequately cover the functions of *caʔʰ*. The marker *caʔʰ* freely combines with a large number of other TAM markers, often without any conceivable change in meaning. Like the other TAM markers, *caʔʰ* is not obligatory in Thai sentences.

The prospective function of *caʔʰ* is particularly evident in the following sentences, the third of which does not refer to future tense:

¹³ It is not absurd to see some English influence in the Thai aspect markers, as popular literature in Thailand started only at the beginning of the 20th century, when translations of English novels were published. Other English influences in Thai syntax include probably the progressive marker *kamləŋ* and the extended use of the (originally only adversative) passive (cf. Foley 1997:415).

- (4.71) nuuk³ bua¹ khuun²maa **cə** khaai⁴siə⁴ kɔ² dai².
 think bored INGR PROS sell IRVS COMM POT
 'If I get bored of them, I can always sell them off.' (LR:76)
- (4.72) thaa²haak¹ dai² pen miə khun phon, **cə** pen thaaj thii²
 if get be wife PREF P. PROS be way ATTR
 kaau² khau² pai suu¹ kamməsit¹ nai sap³som⁴bat¹ thii² ton
 step DIR_{in} go ALL ownership in treasure ATTR self
 nuuk³ yaak¹ dai² yuu¹ thuk³ wan.
 think DES get TMPREvery day
 '[S]he thought that getting to be Phong's wife would be a step
 towards possession of the wealth she hankered after.' (LC:91; ML:55)
- (4.73) heet¹kaan bæp¹nii³ **cə** kɔyt¹ khuun² thuk khran³
 event mannerthis PROS be.born INGR every time
 thii² phom klap¹ baan².phom⁴ **cə** yuu¹ kin lau² phuut²
 ATTR 1sm return house 1sm PROS stay drink alcohol speak
 khui kap¹ luŋ con duuk¹.
 chat with uncle until late.night
 'These events would occur every time I came home. I would sit and
 drink whisky, chatting with the old man until late at night.' (PL:58)

In the above examples the prospective is explained by the fact that first a certain situation has to occur ('I feel bored', 'be Phong's wife', 'I came home') which then leads to a subsequent situation ('I can sell', 'attain ownership of the riches', 'I sit and drink').

In other examples a firm determination is expressed:

- (4.74) phruŋ²nii³ chan⁴ **cə** rak³ khun təlɔt¹ pai.
 tomorrow 1fam PROS love 2hon whole CONT
 'Tomorrow, I will love you forever.' (from a popular Thai song)

The prospective marker does not occur in imperative and prohibitive clauses, but is combinable with negated verbs, resulting in readings like 'will never'.

4.5 Combinations of aspect markers

Combinations of two or more aspect markers are possible. Figure 14 shows the possibilities of combinations. It has to be noted that up to four markers can be combined to express a situation.

Figure 3: Combinability of aspect markers

M2	yuu ¹	pai	yaŋ	kamlaŋ	dai ²	leeu ³	maa	caʔ ¹
M1								
yuu ¹	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-
pai	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
yaŋ	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
kamlaŋ	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	+
dai ²	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-
leeu ³	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
maa	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
caʔ ¹	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+

M1 stands for the first marker in the combination, M2 for the second one. From figure 3 it is evident, for example, that *kamlaŋ* and *caʔ¹* combine only as *kamlaŋ caʔ¹* V, but not as **caʔ¹ kamlaŋ*. *dai²* as second member of a compound is usually possible if it stands in postverbal position, where it has potential value.

The most common combinations have been mentioned in the discussion of the main aspect markers above. Some of the possible combinations of aspect markers have acquired unpredictable idiomatic meanings. These are presented in the following paragraphs.

yuu¹ lee³

One of the most frequent combinations is *yuu¹ lee³*, which deserves special attention. Besides its expected meaning, this combination very often indicates that a situation is inevitable. In (4.75), the interpretation can be deduced from the components:

- (4.75) *khau⁴ saan² baan² yuu¹ lee³.*
 3hum build house TMPRNSIT
 'He is now building a house.'

In (4.76), on the other hand, the interpretation is idiomatic:

- (4.76) *pai duu naŋ⁴ kan mai? thaa² liəŋ³ kə²*
 go look movie REC Q if invite COMM
pai yuu¹ lee³.
 go TMPR NSIT
 'Shall we go to the movies together?' 'If you invite me, of course I'm going.'

The expression *pai yuu' leeu³* here has future reference, indicating the intention of the speaker. We have here a clear example of a verb expressing an intention rather than an actual activity. We can analyse the clause as 'it is now the case that I intend to go'. It is interesting to notice that *yuu' leeu³* can cooccur with verbs that are not possible with *yuu'* alone, i.e. punctual verbs. The normal reading in this case is again 'of course, inevitably' with a strong connotation of imminence, which may or may not be indicated by *cə*:

- (4.77) *rəwəŋ naʔ³, luuk²poŋ¹ (cə) tɛk¹ yuu¹ leeu³.*
 careful EMPH balloon PROS burst TMR NSIT
 'Be careful, the balloon is going to burst any moment!'

The combination *yuu' leeu³* obviously has gone some distance towards lexicalisation and should probably be treated (and glossed) as a distinct morpheme.

maa leeu³ vs. pai leeu³

The perfect indicates that a situation has occurred in the past and remains relevant in the present. This is in Thai usually expressed by the combination of *maa* and *leeu³*. The present relevance is overtly indicated by the use of *maa*, which denotes a 'motion towards the centre of interest', both spatially and temporally. In a sentence like (4.78), *maa* indicates that the direction of the act of giving was towards the speaker, therefore is relevant.

- (4.78) *khau⁴ hai² naŋ⁴suu⁴ maa leeu³.*
 3hum give book come NSIT
 'He gave me/you a book.'

The use of *pai* instead of *maa* maintains the perfect reading, but it cancels the relevance of the act to the speaker. The act of giving was directed away from the speaker, i.e. the object given is gone, as in (4.79).

- (4.79) *phom⁴ hai² naŋ⁴suu⁴ pai leeu³.*
 1sm give book go NSIT
 'I gave you/him a book.'

In both examples, the orientation verbs have spatial as well as temporal function. In other cases, only the temporal factor is relevant, as seen in (4.80a, b).

- (4.80) a. *khau⁴ kin khaau² maa leeu³.*
 3hum eat rice come NSIT
 'He has eaten.' (⇒ he is full now)

- b. *khau*⁴ *kin* *khaau*² ***pai*** ***leɛu***³.
 3hum eat rice go NSIT
 'He has eaten.' (⇒ the food is gone)

Here again the use of *pai* indicates that the event has occurred and its result is not relevant to the speaker anymore, except maybe for the disturbing fact that there is no food left for him to eat.

5 Conclusion

We have shown that the verbs of Thai do have some traits of aktionsart, though most of the aspectual burden is carried by the context and by verbal compounds/auxiliaries. The verbal semantics are underspecified, with only two formally distinct classes, viz. PUNCTUAL and DURATIVE verbs. There is a category of stative verbs which can be established by language internal formal means, but it seems to be of restricted relevance in a discussion about aspect in Thai, as in most cases the statives behave like other non-punctual verbs. Restrictions in the cooccurrence of aspect markers with verbal expressions are in most cases purely pragmatic ones and can be removed if an adequate (if sometimes unnatural) context is created. The basic structure of Thai verbs that has been proposed is

- (/)-----(/) for durative verbs, and
 ⊗ for punctual verbs.

What are called initiotransformatives in other studies do not constitute a separate class, but rather a group of duratives with prominent initial limits. An adequate context can suggest initiotransformative-like readings for most verbal expressions. The same goes for telicity, which is established by the context of the situation described rather than the verb itself.

We have seen that the aspect markers do more than just select a given phase or boundary of the verb structure. Like phasal auxiliaries they can add phases and/or boundaries to the verbal expression and very often they have a modal connotation as summarised in fig. 4.

Figure 4: Summary of Thai aspect markers

marker	punctual verb	durative verb
<i>yuu</i>	(not available)	situation going on at point of reference,
<i>pai</i>	away from centre of interest, completion, irreversible	right limit not reached yet continuing action, away from centre of interest
<i>yaŋ</i>	iterative; 'still, anyway'	persisting situation
<i>kamləŋ</i>	event imminent	situation in progress
<i>dai</i>	get to, potential	get to, inchoative-potential
<i>lɛu³</i>	event has taken place or is imminent	(new) situation has started or ended or is imminent
<i>maa</i>	event has occurred, still relevant	situation has started or occurred, still relevant
<i>caʔ¹</i>	prospective	prospective

Aspect is not an obligatory category in Thai, i.e. no overt aspect marking has to be present in a given sentence. This, together with the open verb structure, often leads to ambiguity which can be removed by contextual means, both linguistic and extra-linguistic.

I have restricted the discussion of the Thai aspect system in this study to the formal means, i.e. the aspect markers and verb categories. Further investigation is needed especially in the field of pragmatics. As the imperfective is generally associated with background information and the perfective with actual events, we may expect that in Thai the common distinction of topic and comment be used to express aspectual differences. In this connection the 'comment marker' *kɔ²* deserves special attention. This marker has probably developed from an older topic marker by reinterpretation and new intonational structuring. Typical translations of *kɔ²* are 'therefore, then, too, still, anyway'. As a comment marker, *kɔ²* introduces a new situation even if this is not indicated by any other formal means. Examples are given in (5.1) and (5.2).

- (5.1) *yuu¹ yuu¹ khau⁴ kɔ²* *maa nɔɔn kap¹ nuu⁴, lɛu³ ruŋ² khun²*
 stay:RDP 3hum COMM come sleep with 1shon SEQ dawn DIR_{up}
nɔɔŋ³ saau⁴ khau⁴ pai *fɔɔŋ³, khau⁴ kɔ²* *lɔɔi top¹ nuu⁴*
 younger.sister 3hum go accuse 3hum COMM CONS slap 1hon
khian² nuu⁴.
 hit 1shon
 'He just came and slept with me, and next morning his sister went off and told, so [Khun Nai] slapped and thrashed me.' (LC:97; ML:59)

- (5.2) *thii² kamlan lap¹ yuu¹ kɔ² thəluŋ² tuə khun²*
 ATTR PROG asleep TMPRCOMM start.up body DIR_{up}
sut¹ rɛɛŋ. [...] thandainan³ ruə kɔ² khlooŋ
 extreme strength at.that.moment boat COMM rock
klap¹ maa ʔiik¹ thaŋ nuŋ¹ duəi² kamlan thuəŋ¹ sut¹ wiəŋ¹.
 return come more way one INST power weight extreme swing
 'Sleepers woke, startled. [...] and at that moment, the boat flung back
 the other way under the full weight of gravity.' (LC:2; ML:2)

Like most aspects of Thai grammar, the use and function of the comment marker, also regarding the expression of aspectual distinctions, needs more in-depth study. There might very well turn out to be a more important distinction than the primary aspect markers and verb categories along the lines of topic/given situation and comment/new situation. We can, of course, not postulate that the verbal expression in the comment clause always indicates a perfective situation. The contrary is seen in (5.3), where the old situation of 'being asleep' persists in spite of the dynamic action expressed in the topic clause.

- (5.3) *phom⁴ pluk¹ khau⁴ lɛu³, tɛɛ¹ khau⁴ kɔ² mai² yɔɔm tuuŋ¹.*
 1sm wake_r 3hum NSIT but 3hum COMM NEG willing wake_{inr}
 'I tried to wake him, but he wouldn't wake up.'

As the classical Thai literature for many centuries consisted only of poems with very restrictive rules for rhymes using a very condensed language, overt aspect marking is found only rarely in classical texts. In the more verbose spoken language, ambiguity is, whenever felt necessary, removed by using overt markers or adverbials. Only with the introduction of secular prose in the form of short stories and novels written in a language closer to the spoken idiom at the beginning of the 20th century did Thai writers start feeling that the use of overt markers with more or less consistency was necessary. As the genre of secular literature arose under Western influence, it is not surprising that some europeanisms have found their way into the Thai language by this way, starting from the formal written language and later expanding into the spoken language (cf. footnote 13).

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